

New Places for New People

Starting new Christian
communities:
A practical guide

Chapter 9

How to Induct
a New Pioneer

How to Induct a New Pioneer

Experience shows that an important factor in the flourishing of pioneers and pioneering projects is good working relationships with the wider church community and its key leadership. A significant moment in shaping this early on is the induction of the pioneer.

A positive induction period will establish healthy working practices from the start. This is important in every setting, but especially in pioneer appointments which, by their nature, can sit uneasily with existing church structures. Having clear patterns in place for everyone will underpin work and support ministry when creative tensions arise.

The following considerations are essential in a well-run induction:

- An environment of welcome is created that will encourage the building of trusting and supportive relationships.
- Important information about the context of the project and working practices is shared.
- All relevant paperwork is understood and completed.
- Aims of the role and expectations of outcomes are clearly explained, agreed and documented.
- Good lines of communication between key stakeholders are detailed and established.
- The new pioneer is regularly given space to ask questions and express any concerns they may have.



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Before the start date

Regular communication before the appointed pioneer starts in the role is an opportunity to get to know one another, and enable any questions to be answered and issues to be resolved. It is wise to appoint one person, usually the line manager, to be the point of contact. This is a time to prepare both administratively and spiritually. In this period of communication the following checklist may help:

| Task | Mark when complete |
|--|--------------------|
| Reassure the pioneer there are people praying for them. | |
| Invite the pioneer to ask any questions they have about the project. | |
| Share with the pioneer any developments that are significant in the life of the project and circuit. | |
| Arrange for the setup of IT equipment and a mobile phone if required. | |
| Clarify any contract queries and complete the required signatures. | |
| Ask the pioneer to share any additional needs or requirements they may have in order to be supported in their role. | |
| Gather any official details required before the pioneer begins, eg bank details and DBS check. | |
| Send the pioneer an information pack about the local community and circuit. | |
| Connect the pioneer with the Learning Network Methodist Pioneering Pathway regional lead and encourage an early application to join. | |
| Arrange Safeguarding Training Module if required. | |
| Check any key commitments taking place in the next year, so they can be factored in to project planning. | |

At the start

Good communication before the pioneer starts means many questions will already have been addressed and paperwork completed. It is disorientating for anyone to begin a new role, and these early days are the time to put the new pioneer at ease. Do not assume knowledge; rather share what may seem to you the most obvious pieces of information. Repetition of details such as expectations, roles, day-to-day working practices, and the names of colleagues is a good thing.

First day

The first day is an opportunity to welcome a new colleague well. We recommend:

- keeping it spiritual. Hold the day in prayer and keep sharing the story of the project, affirming that they are part of its unfurling
- being clear about the day’s timetable, including when they can have a break away from others
- introducing the wider team, both employed and lay, preferably including food in some way
- giving plenty of time to gather informally. The day is more than information sharing.

Below is a recommended checklist for the first day and induction programme:

| Task | Mark when complete |
|---|--------------------|
| At the start of the first day hold a brief welcome meeting. Pray for and talk through what has been arranged for the first day and week. | |
| Introduce pioneer to colleagues from the local context and wider circuit over coffee or lunch. | |
| Provide induction programme. | |
| Working context and equipment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give a tour of the relevant office/building and/or local community. • Allocate keys and complete relevant keyholder forms. • Set up IT equipment and mobile phone. • Provide log-ins to IT systems, social media and website. | |

| Task | Mark when complete |
|---|--------------------|
| <p>Explain your circuit team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information on the team structure. • Ask each person to speak about their individual roles and responsibilities. • Explain the regular patterns of meeting as a team and the expectations of their participation. • Share the key contact details and directories as appropriate. • Explain the project support/oversight group. | |
| <p>Conditions of employment and HR:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss/complete any outstanding paperwork. • Talk over the standard of work expected. • Outline hours of work, breaks and flexibility. • Confirm annual leave (entitlement and how to book). • Explain accident reporting procedure. • Outline confidentiality. • Give an overview of policies and where they are located (ie probationary period, PDR, data protection, flexible working, leave). • Explain sickness absence policy – what to do if sick, who to notify and when. Self-certification/fit notes and return to work interviews. • Outline TOIL/Flexi arrangements (including timesheets). • Give details of district lay employment events. • Explain the probation procedure and clarify duties and responsibilities. • Set first objectives and review dates, including regular one-to-ones and any supervision that will be required. | |

| Task | Mark when complete |
|--|--------------------|
| <p>Support and development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the project management and oversight mechanism. • Discuss their application to the Methodist Pioneering Pathways. • Explain any pastoral supervision or coaching programme. • Explore any further development opportunities such as training relevant to their context. | |
| <p>Clear guidance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set the next week's work and the next steps to orientate themselves. • Share the key stakeholders to set up one-to-ones with. • Diarise the next month of one-to-ones with the pioneer's line manager. • Pray for the pioneer at the end of the day. | |

The following weeks

During the next week and subsequent month, continue to support the pioneer as they orientate themselves in the role. It is particularly important that:

- one-to-ones with key stakeholders are made a priority
- there is space for the pioneer to share any emerging questions
- the pioneer is invited to bring fresh perspective to the evolving project and that their input is valued
- networking with the wider community beyond the church community is encouraged
- reassurance is given that mistakes will be made, and it is okay to ask again how something works.

Below is a recommended checklist for the first few weeks in the role:

| Task | Mark when complete |
|--|--------------------|
| Introduce the staff member to key people and explain who does what. | |
| Standard work practices/policies and culture: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team meetings. • Calendars and diaries. • How to claim work and travel expenses. • Telephone/Computer/Out of office procedure. • Explain any key documents relevant to the project and its vision. | |
| Job requirements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the main duties and responsibilities. • Explain the performance standards. • Discuss the responsibilities and broad expectations of the role. • Discuss initial tasks/projects, and any immediate or urgent activities. • Ensure any key dates are in the diary. • Outline any relevant details of budgets. • Outline the relevant induction courses for completion over the first three months. • Provide an overview of training (including mandatory) and development needs for the role, and the plan to meet them. | |

Well-being

It is right that an induction of a pioneer includes significant information about working patterns, administration, and role expectations. However, there must be appropriate time given to the importance you as an employer place on their well-being.

Take time to reflect with the pioneer about the things that help them not just stay well but also flourish. The discussion should cover some of the following:

- Establishing a regular pattern of days off.
- Accessing spiritual direction and developing healthy spiritual practices.
- Seeking to understand the times, places and ways the pioneer works best.
- Highlighting the need to take time away from the project.
- Encouraging the nurturing and sustaining of support networks beyond the ministry context – with a home church, wider family, and friends.
- Affirming the importance of pursuing interests and passions that bring life.



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